GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5277
ANSWERED ON:05.04.2017
Poor Quality of Food
George Shri (Adv.) Joice;Karunakaran Shri P.;Kodikunnil Shri Suresh

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is planning to announce new rail policy for its catering services;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether this will separate cooking and distribution onboard and if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Government is receiving a deluge of complaints about poor quality of food and if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether the new scheme will improve the condition and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN)

(a) to (c): Yes, Madam. New Catering Policy has been notified on 27th February, 2017 with the objective to provide quality food to rail passengers by unbundling of catering services on trains. Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) has been mandated to carry out the unbundling by creating a distinction primarily between food preparation and food distribution. In order to upgrade quality of food preparation IRCTC to set up new kitchens and upgrade existing ones. The salient features of the new Catering Policy 2017 are as under :-
i. IRCTC to manage catering service on all mobile units. Pantry car contracts awarded by zonal railway to be reassigned to IRCTC.
ii. Meals for all mobile units to be picked up from the nominated kitchens owned, operated and managed by IRCTC.
iii. IRCTC not to outrightly outsource or issue licenses for provision of catering services to private licensees. IRCTC to retain the ownership and be fully accountable for all the issues pertaining to setting up and operation of the Base Kitchens and quality of food.
iv. IRCTC to engage service providers from hospitality industry for service of food in trains.
v. All four Base Kitchens under departmental operation of Zonal Railways (Nagpur, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CSTM) , Mumbai Central (BCT) and Balharshah) and all kitchen units i.e. Refreshment Rooms at A1 and A category stations, Jan Ahaar, Cell Kitchens are to be handed over to IRCTC on 'as is where is basis'. IRCTC to set up its own Kitchens at additional stations, if required.
vi. Kitchen structures/land/space to be handed over by zonal Railways to IRCTC, for a period of 10 years extendable for another period of 5 years, on a token license fee.
vii. IRCTC to be responsible for management of Food Plaza, Food Courts, Fast food units within the ambit of this policy.
viii. The setting up/ development / refurbishment of new or existing Base Kitchens/Kitchen units to be undertaken by IRCTC. These kitchens are to be owned, operated and managed by IRCTC.
ix. IRCTC to develop different types of kitchens keeping in view supply of food and usage assessed.
x. IRCTC to develop the Business model for the kitchens so that they can expand and enhance the service. IRCTC to prepare a detailed concession agreement for setting up/development of the kitchens.
xi. Zonal railway to manage static unit (catering stall /milk stalls/ trolleys etc.) except base kitchens and kitchen units to be handed over to IRCTC .
xii. For the purpose of allotment, a Refreshment Room (at B and below category stations) or a stall or a trolley to be deemed as one unit. As such, a single unit is to be awarded through a single license.
xiii. Provision of perpetual renewal has been done away with. Now it has been envisaged that tenure of all static units (except kitchen units and Food Plaza) shall be 5 years only. Tenure of Food Plaza shall be for a period of 9 years.
xiv. Allotments of General Minor Units at all category stations to be done through open, competitive, two-packet tendering system from the eligible bidders by divisions.
xv. For the first time, it has been envisaged that allotment of Special Minor units (reserved category) at all category stations will be done by divisions through open tendering system within the similar reserved category. The technical eligibility criteria has been simplified.
(d): 1,869 complaints related to poor quality of catering services in trains were received during the year 2016 (i.e. 01.01.2016 to 31.12.2016).
(e): Yes, Madam. The features enunciated in the new Catering Policy, 2017 are expected to improve the conditions as a clear distinction has been made between food preparation and food distribution. Further, initiatives taken to improve catering services inter-alia include: (i) E-catering has been implemented at 357 A1 and A category stations for widening the range of options available to passengers for ordering fresh and hot food of their choice. Proliferation of the scheme at other major stations, being a continuous process, has been mandated through IRCTC (ii) Empanelment of Self Help Groups (SHGs) to provide healthy, wholesome regional cuisine at an affordable cost to the travelling public through e-catering has been initiated and 9 SHGs have been empanelled at 10 stations. (iii) Introduction of 'Ready to Eat' (RTE) precooked food (optional) on trains to ensure supply of hot meals to passengers has been mandated by Ministry of Railways through IRCTC.

******